



**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
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## National Park Service News Release

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### **Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church is closed for Phase II Restoration and will re-open in 2011**

ATLANTA-- On September 10, 2007 the Heritage Sanctuary at Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta closed to begin its Phase II Restoration Project.

Phase II represents the remaining work necessary to restore the church to its period of historic significance, according to Judy Forte, superintendent of the site. "We are focusing on the 1960's, when Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. returned to Atlanta, as co-pastor of Ebenezer and president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference," Forte said. "Many of the Civil Rights Movement's mass meetings, rallies and strategy sessions were held in this historic sanctuary and fellowship hall."

The Heritage Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall were last closed from April 2001 to January 2002 for Phase I of the Restoration Project which addressed the building's infrastructure, safety and mechanical needs by installing a fire suppression system, stabilizing the roof, and replacing the electrical and HVAC systems. Funding for Phase I was made possible primarily by private sources, including a grant of more than \$ 620,000 from the Save America's Treasures program, gifts of nearly \$500,000 from 18 corporations and foundations who were inspired by Georgia-Pacific's CEO A.D. "Pete" Correll, and another \$500,000 contributed by private individuals.

Phase II, an approximately \$4 million, federally funded project will focus on the church's historical architecture and cosmetic design. It will include a combination of restoration and preservation treatments. A high priority will be to restore the church's sanctuary and fellowship hall back to their appearance during the 1960's, when Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. served in the pulpit with his father, "Daddy" King.

"The importance of completing Phase II cannot be overemphasized," Forte said. "This is one of the powerful anchors of a world treasure, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, which annually welcomes more than 600,000 national and international visitors. In addition, each January the Heritage Sanctuary hosts the nationally-broadcast King Holiday Ecumenical Services."

When Phase II is completed visitors will be able to fully experience the church that supported the family, spiritual and cultural development of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from the early age of five, when he was baptized there, to his last days of thirty nine years on April 9, 1968 .

"The National Park Service has been responsible for preserving, protecting and interpreting this historic structure since March 1999, when the congregation moved into their new church, Horizon Sanctuary, stated Forte." "It is our mission and vision to continually and effectively preserve these sacred resources, like Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church that so powerfully make up this world treasure, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site."